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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses common objections to the use of small group activities in the second language classroom; advantages which outweigh these objections; and guidelines for successful implementation of these activities. Prototype small group activities are outlined in two sections. The first lists activities according to skills focus, including vocabulary, which can be adapted to different topics. The second lists activities according to topics, such as directions, numbers, prepositions, shopping, and geography. These activities are described briefly but in detail adequate to permit a teacher to prepare the materials needed for implementation. Although many of these activities could be used with an entire class, maximum benefit will be obtained by using them simultaneously by several small groups at once. (AM)

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SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES FOR SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Dr. Barbara Gonzalez

RATIONALE AND SUMMARY:

Part one of this set lists advantages that accrue to second language students through the use of small group activities. Strongest among these are markedly increased opportunities for communications practice and increased motivation through more participation and through more personalized activity. Also covered are disadvantages to the use of small group activity commonly cited by teachers, along with their refutation and/or explanation of how to eliminate them by following certain principles in preparing the activities.

Part two of the set comprises two separate listings of small group activities suitable for use with second language classes that can meet the criteria described in Part one. In one section the activities are pre-selected for a specific focus, such as clothing vocabulary, certain action verbs, etc. In the other section activities are prototypes into which teachers may put relevant content, such as a vocabulary activity, an unstructured speaking activity, etc. Many of these activities could be used with a whole class but will provide maximum benefit when conducted simultaneously by several small groups at once. Each activity is described briefly but in detail adequate to permit a teacher to prepare the materials needed and implement it.

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ACTIVITIES FOR SMALL GROUPS IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

-Dr. Barbara Gonzalez-

1. COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE USE OF SMALL GROUPS (WHICH ARE OUTWEIGHED BY 2 AND PROVIDED FOR BY 3)

   . Beginners don't know enough to carry on alone.

   . Students are too immature to stay on task.

   . Process of getting into groups disrupts class.

   . Too much time is required to prepare extra materials needed.

   . Students will make errors that won't be corrected.

   . One student will do all the work.

2. ADVANTAGES OF USING SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

   . Interaction goes from student to student and obviates large quantity of teacher talk common in many classrooms.

   . A student working in a group of five participates (and therefore learns) far more than a student working in a group of thirty.

   . The objective of having all students participate is accomplished in far less time when several small groups work simultaneously.

   . Motivation is usually greater in small groups. The closer interaction appears to fascinate.

   . Less lengthy material is required to do a given activity in small groups than to do the same activity in a large group because one needs only enough items for five students rather than for thirty. One can simply duplicate 5 or 6 sets of a shorter activity.

   . Some students respond better to the peer teaching they get in small groups.

   . Students can get more attention and assistance with their performance because they are performing more.

. The greater involvement caused by the necessity to participate constantly may reduce the disruption in the classroom caused by boredom while students await a turn in a group of thirty.

3. CONSIDERATIONS IN DESIGNING SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

. Students must be prepared so they understand the activity is not a game but a potentially beneficial learning activity that is an integral part of the lesson.

. Group must have a stated goal, preferably a product. To achieve this with oral activities, appoint a recorder in each group to submit the written version of the oral "products".

. Teacher must circulate.

. 4-6 students is the optimum group size.

. Many games adapted for small groups use short (even 1-word) responses. Be sure to use activities that call for questions, statements, extended conversation, etc., as well.

. Build the activity so that all must participate. If students are each given a part of the information necessary to complete the task/produce the product, this will happen.

. To insure attention, the teacher can offer "check" points to a team/group if the person he/she calls on can repeat what was just said in his/her group.

. For beginners, provide structure, not open discussion and reporting.

. To avoid disruption, don't "number off" to form groups. Group students with those near whom they are already seated. Save the diversified "numbered off" groups for a day when you don't have a tight schedule and/or the students are especially cooperative.

PROTOTYPE SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activities that can be adapted to different topics

VOCABULARY

1. Pasando la bolsa (oral)

Each row or team passes a paper pack with vocabulary cards in it back and forth until the music stops. Then the person holding the bag on each team must draw a card and name the item or action depicted for a point showing the card (which he then lays aside). Action continues until all the cards are used, and the team with the most points wins. Teacher regulates length of game with number of cards.

2. Add-ons (aural-oral)

Each row or team starts with a sentence like "En la tienda compre__". Each person repeats the previous form and adds a reasonable item for a point. If necessary, the new item may be suggested by student drawing a picture card. If a member can't do this, the turn is lost to the next team. Each team's sentence will be different. After each person has performed, the team with the most points wins. The game can involve verbs as well by calling for students to say "En la tienda ellos compraron (tu compraste or el/ella compro) _____,___y____, y yo compre_____." It can involve adjectives if there is a rule that each item be modified. It can use one category only, such as clothes or food, if this is specified. It can also involve verbs, such as "Fui al campo y nadé____, comí y_____." These two games can be done by small groups by having responses written and then checked to see which teams have the most correct answers.

UNIT REVIEW

1. Jeopardy (aural-oral, reading)

The teacher puts the material to be reveiwed onto cards in pockets in the following format:

a VOCAB.	b SPEAKING	c GRAMMAR	d CULTURE	e QUESTIONS
10	10	10	10	10
20	20	20	20	20
30	30	30	30	30
40	40	40	40	40

In a, the teacher places pictures to be named or words to give equivalents for. In b, the teacher puts directed dialog lines. In English, such as "ask someone what his grandmother's name is" or in Spanish: "Pregúntele a alguien como se llama su abuela". In c, the teacher can put multiple choice items, fill-ins, etc. In d, there are questions to answer, terms to identify, etc. In e, there will be questions to answer. For 30-40 points these must be read aloud to the student. For 10-20, he may read them himself. For young children the teacher may read all items to the students. The students are on

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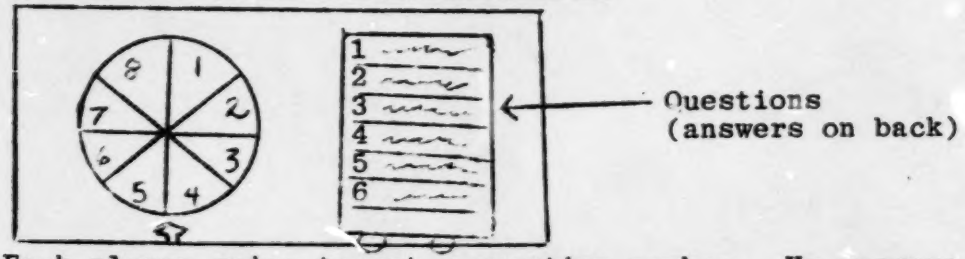
several teams and, in turn, make choices about what to draw. The teacher makes several items for each category, but when a pocket is empty, students must make another choice. The teacher may determine time limit for game in advance. Small groups may play if the teacher has more than one set. A student is appointed to lead the activity in each group. The winners in each group are recognized at the end..

Dial-a-Problem (aural-oral, reading)



Each player spins to get a question number. He answers correctly orally to get points. (This format can be used for synonyms/antonyms, object pictures to name, general questions to answer, etc.)

Matching Card Game (aural-oral, reading)

Each group has a card deck of questions/answers, subjects/verbs, nouns/adjectives, verbs/adverbs, sentence beginners (prepositional phrase completions, etc..any one type or a combination). Each player is dealt six cards. Players draw and discard in twin, laying down pairs when they can read their set aloud correctly,

Interviewing (aural-oral, reading, writing)

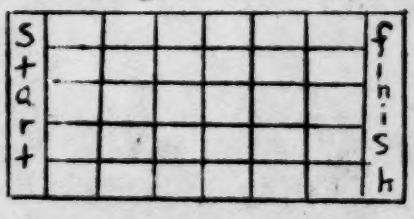
Each member of each group has a question to ask of each other member. He records the answers. He must then meet with the persons in the other groups who had the same question to prepare a summary report for the class. Topics can vary, with questions in target language such as "What did you eat for breakfast today?"

Ranking (aural-oral, writing)

Each group is given a topic in target language such as "Best things to do on Saturday." Each member suggests items for the list (still in target language) recorder is making and then group votes on their favorites. Teacher then leads whole group summary and final ranking on board.

All-Purpose Oral Performance

Each group has a race track game board and beans, buttons, cars, etc. to play with. They are provided with a stack of directed dialog cards, which they draw in turn. For each correct performance a player may move one space.



Chaining

In each group student #1 starts with a statement/question sequence, such as "My name is_____. What's your name?" Student #2 answers #1 and then repeats #1's lines to #3. Other possibilities are "I have 2 brothers and sisters, How many brothers and sisters do you have?", "My birthday is June 12. When is your birthday?", "Mi camisa es de poliester. ¿De qué es tu blusa?", etc. For a large group teacher monitors. With small groups, a reorder can hand in the group's responses.

Personal Notebooks (reading-writing)

At appropriate intervals during a semester (when the vocabulary items come up) students can work together preparing special notebooks with pages like the following:

(a) Family - Student lists each member by name, relationship to him/her, and description.

(b) Home - Student sketches houses and writes description and location. He also sketches floor plan and lables rooms and furnishings (or can inventory furnishings.

(c) Vital statistics - Student lists facts about himself (as for driver's license).

(d) Favorite activities - Student either lists these himself or, if a beginner, marks them on a check list provided by the teacher.

(e) Favorite clothes - Student either lists items or checks items in the various categories: colors, articles, appearance, (fit, size, age, etc.), fabrics, fabric patterns, etc.

(f) Friends - Student lists friends by name and description and writes a few sentences about what he likes about each one.

(g) Pets - Student lists these by name and description and comments on what he likes about the animal.

(h) Songs - Student lists his favorite types or identifies types on a check list.

(i) Foods - Student lists his favorites in each category on worksheet (cereals, breads, vegetables, fruits, meats, etc.).

Using Directions

1. DANDO EL NOMBRE (aural)
   izquierda, derecha
   este, oeste
   norte, sur
   oriente, poniente

   Any pair of words denoting directions may be the focus. Two teams line up with one player on the center. Center calls on someone and gives one of the "focus" words. The player must name correctly the person who is to the derecha, este, or go to the center himself. Teams may shift positions and continue to play, using a new pair of words. Team with most points wins. When playing in small groups, each "team" forms a circle around the caller and keeps a score for later comparison with other groups.

2. TRUST WALK (aural-oral)

   One player is blindfolded. The teacher has established a "maze" through the room by moving a few desks and putting some obstacles on the floor (wastebasket, book, etc.) The students comprise two teams. Members of the teams take turns issuing a statement to the player about what steps, turns, etc., to take next. For each comprehensible and reasonable statement the team gets a point. For an unusable statement, the turn is lost to the other team. The team with the most points when the player has traversed the maze wins.

3. (directions con't) (reading, writing)

   Each group has a map and a list of places to go in order and must write instructions for getting from one to the other. The first group with correct instructions wins.

NUMBERS (reading, oral)

Teacher prepares flash cards with numbers written out. Students work in teams. Teacher starts by putting three numbers on flannel board. First person in first team gets point if he/she can add them correctly and can tell the teacher the answer. In any case, he then puts three more numbers up for first member of next team, etc. Game is over when everyone has had a turn. When playing in small groups, students are each given a card. Group must write out grand total of all their cards.

PREPOSITIONS (aural, oral)

Class works in two teams. Teacher provides a set of large (so all can see) picture cards with drawings showing a character in different positions, such as

Members of the teams must make appropriate statements about the cards to earn their points. When playing in small groups, each student receives a card and must make a statement to be recorded on the group sheet for checking and determination of winning group.

ADVERBS/COMMANDS (aural-oral)

Class works in two teams. Members of the teams take turns issuing commands with adverbs, such as "Levántese rapidamente." Players earn points by providing a command and by performing correctly. There may be NO duplicate commands. (If needed, teacher may provide commands to be read. Then points are just for performance.) In small groups this can be a translation in which each student receives a card and must give the second language equivalent (to be recorded on the group's sheet.) An additional point is gained if his addressee can perform the command.

SHOPPING (reading, writing)

Each group member is provided with a newspaper ad reproduction and the recorder has a worksheet in target language. Students pool information. Use a topic such as:

a. Groceries/clothes - ex. "You have $30 to spend and _____, _____, and _____ to buy. Where would you buy what?"

b. Cars - provide a set of instructions, such as, "Circle all 1971 cars for less than $X."

c. Animals - provide instructions, questions such as "where do you call for free kittens."

d. Furniture - provide questions, such as "which is the least expensive dining set available?"

e. Jobs - provide questions, such as "which job listed offers the highest salary?"

f. Movies - questions cover areas such as "Where is _____ playing?" "What time does ___ begin?"

BODY PARTS (aural-oral, reading)

Each student in each group is given a card in the target language with a statement such as "I help you see" (hear, breathe, throw, kick, wear your belt, scratch, chew, touch, etc.) to read to the group, who must guess the part. The recorder hands in the group's responses for scoring.

CITY/COUNTRY/GEOGRAPHY DESCRIPTION (aural-oral)

Each group member except the recorder is given a copy of a picture/map and takes turns giving directions to the recorder on how to reproduce it. At the end of specified time the group whose reproduction is closest to the original wins. Students need to know some direction words and prepositions in order to do this activity.

NEGATIVES/INTERROGATIVES

1. Ten questions (aural-oral)
   Practice a set of questions like the following with the students. Then give each member of two teams an object or picture of an object. Each team takes turns guessing the items held by members of the other team within ten question, gaining a point for each item guessed. Teacher controls vocabulary with objects, pictures, and questions.

   ¿Es _____? (list of color words)
   ¿Es de _____? (list of materials words)
   ¿Es grande?
   ¿Es pequeño?
   ¿Es animal? (list)
   ¿Es objeto?
   ¿Puede comerlo? (list of items)
   ¿Puede ponérselo? (clothing list)
   ¿Puede leerlo? (list)
   ¿Vive en casa?
   ¿Vive en un rancho?
   ¿Es mueble? List of items)

   Many responses will be negative, of course. The teacher will "rehearse" a few with the students, such as "no, no es de lana."

   Other modifications could include pictures of actions (calling for rehearsal of verbs, such as " ¿Estás nadando?" "No, no estoy nadando.") or names of places (calling for questions like "¿ Están los Estados Unidos?" and "No, no está en los Estado Unidos.")

NEGATIVES/INTERROGATIVES (Con't)

The game is played the same way in smaller groups of six or eight who are divided into two "teams." The group that guesses all the items from both teams within it first wins.

STORES/DEMONSTRATIVES/REFLEXIVES (oral, written)

Each now is a team and receives a stack of cards from the teacher that has pictures of objects from several "store" categories, such as foods from the grocery, notions from the variety store, tools from the hardware, plants from the nursery, clothes from the clothing store, a few items from the drug store, etc. Members of the teams must make an appropriate statement about each item in the pattern

> This is a _____ from the _____ (also practices demonstratives). OR One buys a _____ in the _____. (also practices reflexives)

in order to earn their points.

The same procedure is used in small groups except that each student's statement is written by the recorder and checked for scoring later.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA (oral, written)

Each group is given a biographical data form to fill out on a famous person. Each student in the group is given a different card containing a short narrative about the person that provides part of the needed information. They read their cards aloud and then help the recorder fill out the form. First group to finish correctly wins.

PAST TENSE (aural-oral, reading)

Each student is given a verb (on a card) to pantomime. Then members of the teams take turns guessing what a member of another team did. Use verbs such as: open, close, walk, run, jump, leave, enter, wake up, get up, lie down, stand up, sit down, wash, shave, comb, brush, etc.

When playing in small groups, students follow same procedure of performing and guessing with members of their own group. The group that writes down the correct set of statements first wins.

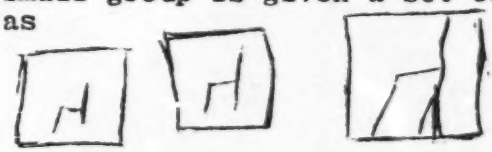
CLOTHING/PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS (aural-oral)

1. In a small group each student takes a turn in saying "Que se levante la persona..." or "Que se siente la personna..., completing the sentence with some description of another student in the group, such as "Que se levante la persona con los calcetines rojos."

2. "I spy" (aural-oral)
   Each student has a turn to make a statement about someone in the group/room, "Veo un hombre que tiene unos calcetines azules."
   The others have three chances and thirty seconds to guess who it is. If they don't guess it, the player gets a point.

COMPARATIVES (oral, written)

Each small group is given a set of picture cards to sort into sets, such as



The students must then prepare two sentences for each set of cards, such as,

La silla azul es más grande
que la silla amarilla.
La silla roja es la más grande.

The group correctly completing its task first wins.

MEASUREMENTS (aural-oral)

Each member of a small group or team is given three things in the room to measure (scales, rulers, etc. are available. Answers are given orally to a recorder. The group with the most correct answers wins.

WEATHER (aural-oral, reading, writing)

Each student in a group is given a card in the target language relating something about the weather in a given week. The students read their information aloud and use it to compile answers to the questions that the recorder has been given. The group whose correct answer sheet is submitted first wins.

FOODS/MONEY/NUMBERS (aural-oral, reading, writing)

Each member of each group is given a section from a menu. As the recorder reads each question from the worksheet, students read relevant information that they have and compile answers to the questions. The group whose correct answersheet is submitted first wins 5 points per member; the second group wins 4; the third, 3, etc. A cumulative record is kept of points on group activities as an incentive to students to participate and finish their group work.